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REPORT

OF

The Committee appointed by the B.C.
Board of Trade to enquire into
the resources and trading
prospects of the
Yukon.

*To the President and Council of the British Columbia
Board of Trade:*

GENTLEMEN :—Your committee appointed to report on the resources of the Yukon District as to the facilities for transportation of passengers and freight to this region as well as to what steps they consider advisable to open up this important section, begs to report as follows :

The greater part of the supplies going into the Yukon District is taken *via* St. Michael and the Lower Yukon River which is a long route and is only open for a short time each year. We believe that it would be in the interest of the miners and British Columbia merchants to have a more direct and quicker route of travel to this northern part of British Columbia and Northwest Territories. It appears to us that a short route beginning at the head of Lynn Canal, at Skagnawa Bay, which is accessible by sea-going vessels, then following the White Pass to the navi-

gable waters of the Yukon, is a feasible one. The distance over this route is said to be about thirty miles.

We refer you to a more detailed report of a committee of the Board appointed to report on this subject in 1888, with which in a great degree we concur.

White Pass, to which we have referred, we believe is much the shorter route, and although there may be some differences of opinion as to the altitude of the Pass, it is not, we understand, more than 2,600 feet above the level of the sea. After passing over the range of mountains the route is comparatively easy. Dr. Dawson says of it:—

The White Pass appears to offer better opportunity for making a trail or road which, if constructed, would render the entire region much more easy of access.

In order to make this route of service we believe boats could be utilized on the lakes and upper waters of the Yukon for carrying passengers and supplies to the miners and traders of this region.

We therefore suggest that this Board urge upon the Dominion and Local Government the necessity of assisting towards the cost of a road over this route, by bonusing or otherwise providing for an expenditure of money in making such a road, or aiding the building of boats necessary for opening up the route.

The resources of this country as a mining region have been placed before you in former reports; we believe the facilities it offers for raising farm products should be referred to. Dr. Dawson's reports on the agricultural and fur-bearing capabilities and economic importance of the district are as follows:—

Taking into consideration all the facts which I have been able to obtain, as well as those to be derived from an

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examination of the natural flora of the country, and the observed advance of vegetation, which, in the absence of actual experiments, are capable of affording valuable data, I feel no hesitation in stating my belief that such hardy crops as barley, rye, turnips, and flax can be successfully cultivated in the Yukon District as far north as the former position of Fort Selkirk, near the 63rd parallel, or in other words about 1,000 miles north of Victoria. Taken in conjunction with the physical features of the region, this means that chiefly within the drainage area of the Yukon and for the most part to the north of the 60th parallel, there exists an area of about 60,000 square miles, of which a large proportion may and doubtless in the future will be utilized for the cultivation of such crops, and in which cattle and horses might be maintained in sufficient number for local purposes without undue labour, as excellent summer grazing is generally to be found along the river valleys, and natural hay meadows are frequent. I do not maintain that the country is suitable for immediate occupation by a large, self-supporting agricultural community, but hold that agriculture may before many years be successfully prosecuted, in conjunction with the natural development of the other resources of this great country of which by far the most valuable lies east of the line of the Alaskan boundary.

The fur trade is a very important and valuable one; Dr. Dawson reports on it as follows :—

Gold and furs are at present the only articles of value derived from the great region here referred to as the Yukon District. It is impossible to secure accurate information as to the value of furs annually obtained, but sufficient is known to show that it must be very considerable.

We quote his remarks on the economic value of this region as we consider them worthy of notice :—

Without including the northern part of British Columbia, respecting which more has already been made known, but restricting ourselves to the great area of 192,000 square miles situated to the north of the 60th parallel and west of the Rocky Mountains, which I have referred to as the Yukon District, it may be said that the information now obtained is sufficient to warrant a confident belief in its great value. Very much yet remains to

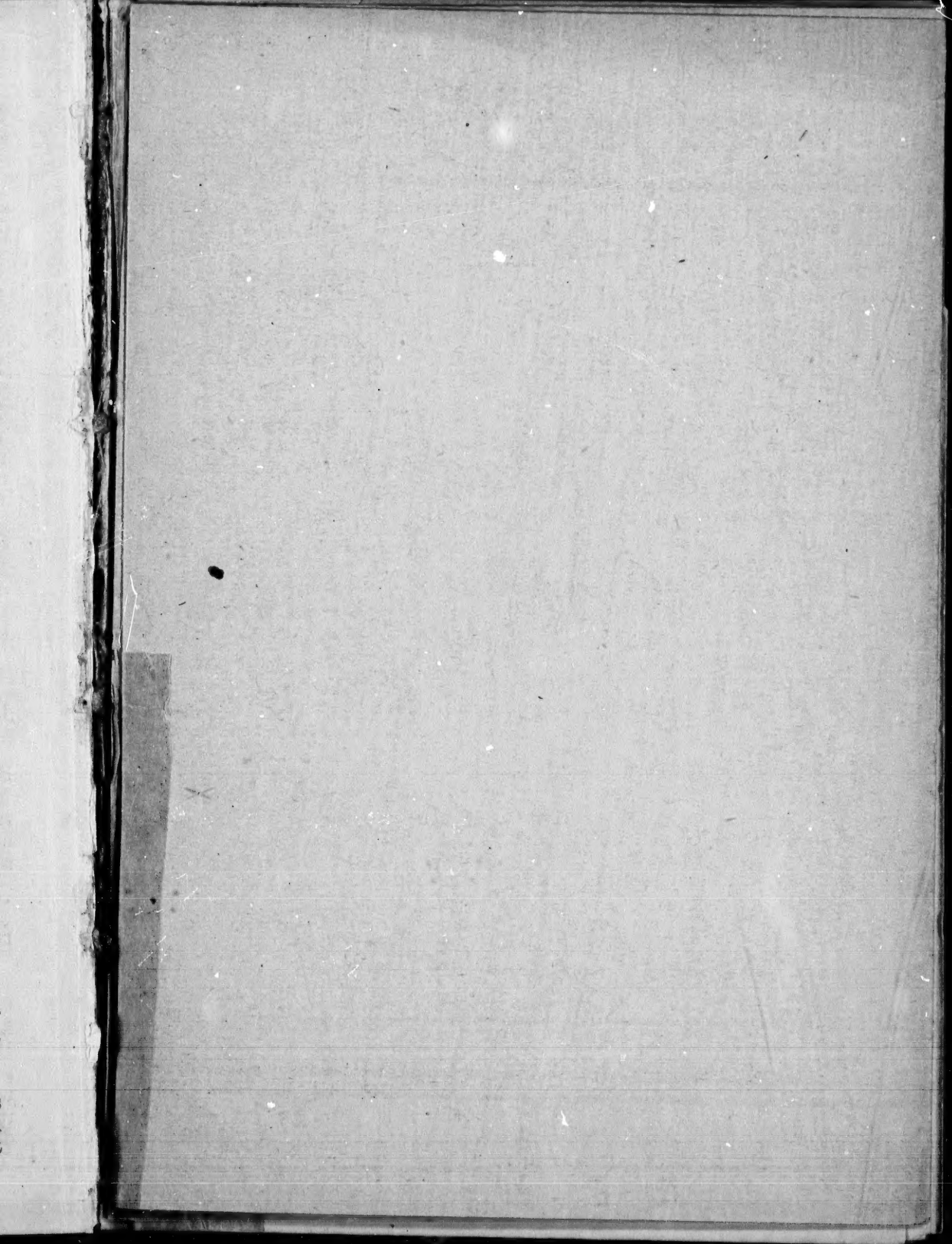
be learned respecting it, but it is known to be rich in furs, well supplied with timber, and it is traversed by a great length of navigable rivers. It is already yielding a considerable yearly product in gold, and presents every indication of a country rich as well in other metals, and including deposits of coal. In its southern portion, situated between the 60th and 65th degree of latitude, is comprised an area of probably not less than 30,000 square miles, suitable for eventual agricultural occupation, and presenting none of the characters of a sub-Arctic region, which have, in advance of its exploration, been attributed to it by some writers. In each of these particulars and in climate it is greatly superior to the corresponding inland portion of the territory of Alaska. It may, in fact, be affirmed with little room for doubt, that the region here spoken of as the Yukon District surpasses in material resources the whole remaining northern interior portion of the continent between the same parallels of latitude.

We would also add a report given by R. G. McConnell, B.A., in 1891, on the exploration of the Yukon and Mackenzie Basins, containing an economic synopsis of this northern region :—

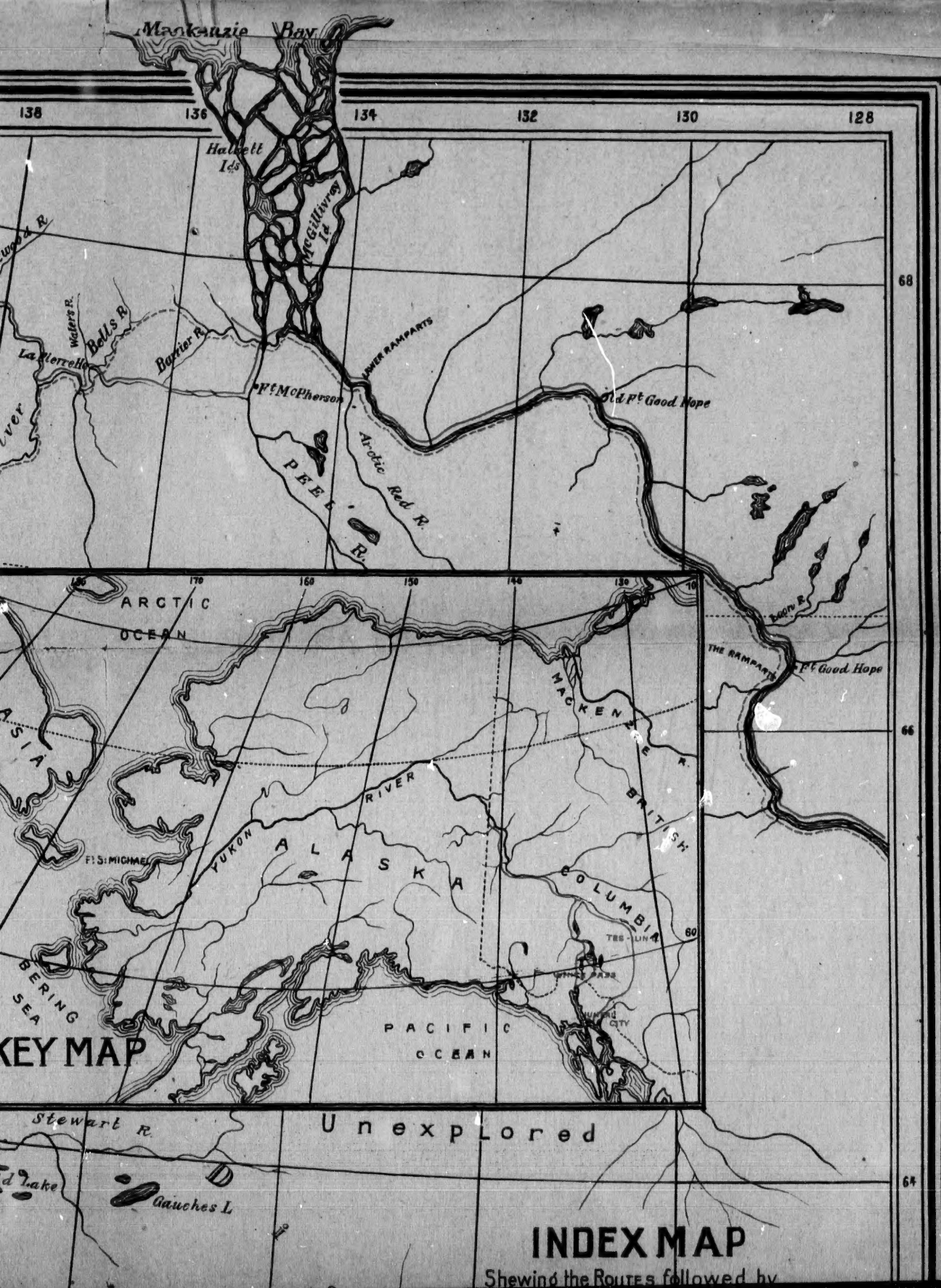
GOLD.—As a full account of the discovery of gold and the progress and present condition of gold mining in the Upper Liard, Cassiar and Yukon Districts is given by Dr. Dawson in the annual report of the survey, 1887-88, part B, pp. 78-86 and 178-83, it will be unnecessary to go into the subject in detail here. "Colours" of gold occur in the bars of the Liard all the way to its mouth, but no deposits of economic value have been found below the Devil's Portage. A number of bars were worked between the Devil's Portage and the mouth of Dease River, for several years after the discovery of gold on the Liard by Messrs. McCulloch and Thibert in the year 1872, but these are now all abandoned and the records of them lost. At the present time no miners are employed on the Liard below the mouth of Dease River.

Gold in paying quantities has not been found on either the Mackenzie or the Porcupine, and the rock formations bordering these rivers do not appear to be gold bearing.

On the Pelly-Yukon above the boundary, and as far as the mouth of the Pelly, the limit of my examination, gold in varying quantities is of almost universal occurrence, but







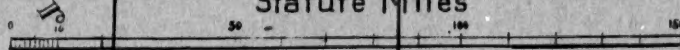


Shewing the Routes followed by
The Members of the

YUKON EXPEDITION

AND THE PROJECTED ROUTES INTO THE COUNTRY

Statute Miles



DAWSON, Route
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Reproduced by the Province Publishing Company
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up to the present time active operations have been confined almost entirely to two of the tributaries. Of these, Forty-Mile Creek enters the Pelly-Yukon from the west, about forty miles above the boundary, and has its course mostly in Alaska, while Stuart River comes in from the east and flows through Canadian territory all the way. Gold was discovered on the Stuart in 1885, and in that and the following year the estimated yield of the various bars amounted to over \$100,000; but in 1887 it was almost deserted, owing to the discovery of coarse gold on Forty-Mile Creek and the consequent "stampede" of the miners to that stream. The gold on the Stuart is reported to be "fine," and the bars are often exhausted under present conditions in a single season's work; but as they are abandoned when the yield falls much below \$10 a day per man, it is highly probable that work on them will be resumed when improved methods of mining are introduced and the present exorbitant prices for labour and provisions are reduced. Extensive gravel benches of a more or less auriferous character border the Stuart in many places, and promise remunerative returns if worked on a large scale.

Forty-Mile Creek proved a veritable bonanza to most of the miners who reached it early in 1887, but in 1888 the returns, owing to the continued high water, were disappointing. In the former year the yield has been estimated all the way from \$75,000 to \$150,000, and was probably in the neighbourhood of \$100,000. In 1888 the yield in consequence of the enforced idleness of the miners declined to less than \$20,000, most of which was obtained from the upper or Alaskan part of the stream. The number of miners employed on the stream during the two seasons varied from about 100 to 350. The gold on Forty-Mile Creek is coarser than that obtained from the Stewart, but the auriferous bars are usually of little depth, and are soon skimmed over. Some attention was paid during the season of 1888 to prospecting the gulches and gravel terraces bordering the stream, but these have not been worked as yet to any notable extent.

The country rock bordering the Pelly-Yukon, all the way from the boundary to White River and beyond, consists of schists broken through by eruptive granites and diorites, geological conditions peculiarly favorable to the existence of metalliferous deposits. (See p. 140.) They are traversed in many places along the river by promising quartz veins and ledges, but these have been very little prospected as yet, the miners contenting themselves up to

the present with the development of the more easily worked placer deposits.

SILVER.—A small lode of argentiferous galena crosses Forty-Mile Creek a couple of miles above its mouth. A specimen of this brought back by Mr. Ogilvie and analysed by Mr. Hoffmann yielded 38 ounces of silver to the ton.

COPPER.—Copper pyrites, in small quantities, was noticed at several points between Forty-Mile Creek and Fort Reliance. It does not occur in veins, but appears to impregnate individual layers of the schist itself. Traces of copper were also observed in the Castle Mountain dolomites at the base of the Nahanni Butte section.

FIBROUS SERPENTINE.—Some of the serpentines in the vicinity of Forty-Mile Creek occasionally assume a fibrous structure and pass into a picrolite or coarse asbestos. A small specimen of good serpentine asbestos has also been brought from the Stewart River. (See Annual Report Geol. Survey, 1887-88, p. 27b.)

GYPSUM.—Gypsum occurs in large quantities in the Devonian rocks of Bear Mountain, at the mouth of Bear River. (See p. 102.)

SALT.—Several salt springs drain into Salt River, near Fort Smith, about twenty-five miles above its mouth. Some of the springs have basins ten to twelve feet in diameter, which are encrusted with crystalline salt of excellent quality. (See p. 65.) Salt is also reported to occur on the head waters of a small stream which enters the Mackenzie about fifty miles above Fort Norman.

SULPHUR.—Mineral springs of large volume occur at Sulphur Point, on the south shore of Point Brûlée on the north shore. In both cases small quantities of sulphur are deposited in the basins of the springs and along the channels of the streamlets which drain them.

COAL.—Small seams of impure lignite were found on the Liard, a few miles above the Little Cañon, and large blocks of drift lignite occur on the same stream at the mouth of Coal River. On the Mackenzie the Tertiary beds at the mouth of Bear River hold several seams of lignite, ranging in thickness from two to four feet, and one seam which was concealed at the time of my visit, is reported by Richardson to be nine feet thick. The lignite here is of

inferior quality, and has been burnt in many places for some distance from the surface by fires, which have been in existence since the river was first discovered. West of the mountains a small seam of lignite was observed on the Porcupine, a few miles above the mouth of Old Crow River, and seams of coal are reported to occur in a small stream which enters the Pelly-Yukon from the east below Forty-Mile Creek. The latter is probably of cretaceous age.

We have every reason to believe that when the boundary award is made it will be found that the head of Lynn Canal is in British Columbia, and should this prove to be the case the shipping would be greatly facilitated. In the meantime we would urge upon the Dominion Government the necessity of making customs bonding arrangements with the Government of Alaska or the United States for the passage of goods in bond through the territory lying between Lynn Canal and British Columbia and the Northwest Territories. It is also necessary that the Dominion Government should have Customs Officers along the coast of this district.

At present the trade of the Yukon country is largely in the hands of the Americans, and we believe the time has come when steps should be taken to secure for the merchants and traders of the province a portion thereof.

The great distance to be traversed and the difficulty of getting provisions into the mining regions necessarily make food stuffs expensive. By establishing a route from the head of Lynn Canal the time taken in the transportation of goods would be shortened and miners thereby enabled to remain in the country later in the year, which would be a decided advantage to them.

We also are of opinion that the Local and Dominion Governments should assist by some scheme such as we have referred to, namely, by assisting financially

in the building of a road or by bonusing some person or company to build such a road and by placing boats on the upper waters of the Yukon undertake to establish a direct communication with the mining regions. We further urge that the Dominion Government be asked to improve at once the mail service with this section through the route we have referred to, so as to give the miners and traders better mail communication.

We consider it is advisable to have a map prepared of this portion of the Yukon and northern part of British Columbia, so that the members of the Dominion House and Local Legislature could at a glance see the importance of the district. Such a map would at the same time be of service to those who contemplate settling or travelling in this northern region.

Respectfully submitted this 6th day of February, 1896.

G. L. MILNE, *Chairman.*



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